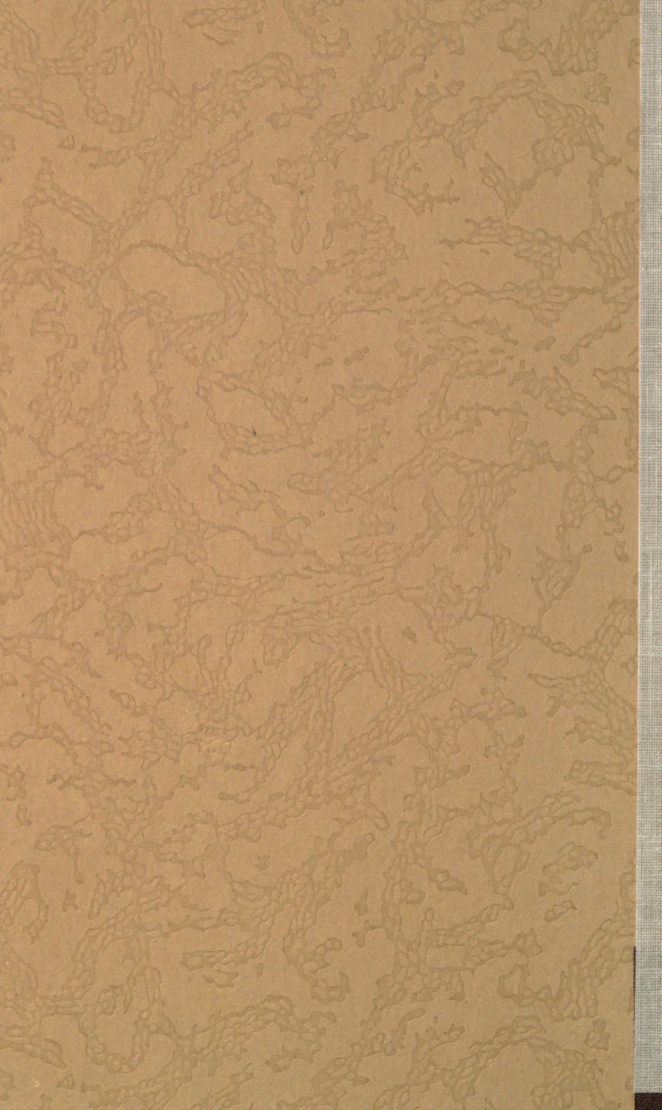


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RAYMOND



BY

HENRY MORRIS MOORE, B. D. A. B.

RAYMOND

HOW A BOY BECAME A MAN BY
HIS OWN EFFORTS

DEDICATED TO MY SCHOOLMATES AND
FRIENDS

BY
HENRY MORRIS MOORE, B. D. A. B.

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PREFACE

IN sending forth this little volume the author hopes and prays that some youth hitherto discouraged shall catch inspiration and cheerfully plod the rugged road until he reaches the goal. Many a person fails because the path of success seldom, if ever, lies through the flowered gardens of earth. There must be will, backed up by courage, if you determine to rise despite the ghost of seeming failures. The character of this volume is a fair illustration of this.

There has been no effort or attempt at flowers; these have been left to the writers who did not have to acquire this ability. Plainness and everyday words have been used in this work, hoping to convey the truth in a manner that will satisfy the reader.

For criticism and suggestions I am indebted to Prof. E. C. McCants, Superintendent of the City

High School, and Prof. Robertson, of Columbia, S. C.

If, after reading these pages with care, one is made to feel like making the most of his life, I shall feel that my effort has not been in vain.

H. M. MOORE,

Pastor St. Paul Baptist Church,

Anderson, S. C.

February 22, 1911.

RAYMOND

CHAPTER I.

HIS BIRTH.

WHILE the darkness of an autumn night was gradually disappearing, giving place to a light that was becoming visible in the distant East, there was a heart throbbing with joy, and then with sorrow, which was cheered only by the melodious voice of a twittering swallow that rang out from among the branches of an old oak that stood in the back yard. The crowing of the cock, which seemed to be making known to his neighbors that day was breaking, had died away, and he was leading his companions out to their daily occupation, when the door of the little two-room cottage swung open as if to admit the morning breeze. The sun now begins to come forth, "which is a bridegroom coming out of his chamber," flooding the earth with his brilliant light. It did not appear too soon. Doubtless no place on earth needed his light more than this humble home. Surely the king of the day understood his mission, for the door had scarcely opened before his light had filled every nook and

corner of the room, which served to gladden the heart of a poor destitute woman and made her feel that God had not forsaken her.

Now, six weeks had left their records full of events to brighten the pages of the community's history, so the whole talk of the vicinity was: "What will poor Betty do with that little boy?" The father had gone to town six months before the child's birth to purchase a home, for he said: "There is nothing to be made on the farm," he, therefore, decided to change his business so that he could better care for his family as he had long desired. His whereabouts had become as great a mystery as his purchasing a home in town without money or friends. It was not expected that Betty's sister, who had willingly left her home for a month and had done all that she could to add to her comfort, would remain there. Neither did it seem wise for Mrs. Alston to give up housekeeping and attempt to rear her son in a family with other children. The neighbors had suggested this and that for the poor woman to do until they had exhausted all the resources of the whole community, and finally landed upon the spot from which they had started six weeks before, each one ending, "I don't know what poor Betty will do with that little boy." It is amusing to carefully note the interest assumed in one's affairs on a plantation, especially if these affairs are beyond the ordinary happenings of the place. Each one seems to know what ought to

be done when the matter belongs to another person and will give advice unsolicited.

"I can better teach twenty what was good to be done than to be one of the twenty to follow my own instructions."

This problem must be solved, not by her relatives or friends, but by herself. Here she is left in a two-room cottage to await the return of the man who had pledged, not to her alone, but before a crowded church a little more than twelve months ago, that he would "love, honor, cherish, protect; forsaking all others in sickness as well as in health, in adversity as well as in prosperity; and cleave unto her as long as they both shall live." She now begins to examine her conduct with him from the day she had pledged her all to him, but there was nothing discovered by her that would in the least justify such an act on his part. Then she thinks for a moment and tries hard to decide that after all he did not really love her. Her mind now runs back over the five years that they were lovers, and she recalls how he appeared perfectly happy only when he was in her presence. She is reminded of the pleasant faces of Ella and Bertha who would have given half the world if they could have won his affections, and even though they were better educated and their parents were in better circumstances, making the inducements on their side much more desirable than on hers, nevertheless, Frank had declared to her over and over again

that if he did not marry her he would die a broken hearted bachelor. She recalled again, when there was a little misunderstanding between, them and she decided that it would be better for them to cease their correspondence, and wrote him to that effect, how he almost lost his mind. How, when his sister, Maude, came and spent a night with her, who declared that he did not intend to mar her feelings when he said that he would not come to her home any more because she did not receive him on the evening when he called unexpectedly. With these, and a score of other evidences, as they arose one by one before her vision, it was not difficult to conclude that he firmly loved her. Yet there must be reasons assigned for the action of her husband which had been so freely and frequently condemned by others as well as by her relatives, and she had the unpleasant task of assigning these reasons. It is not like a loving wife to see her husband's faults however numerous. Therefore, she finally decides, that because his landlord refused to allow him to connect to his farm a certain five-acre patch near his house, in which she might work and save her the long walk of a mile to his farm, he became disgusted and left the plantation. The excuse that "there is nothing to be made on the farm, etc.," was only a pretext of getting off. As she thus reasoned and decided in his favor she was unconsciously justifying his action. Oh, woman's love, thou art blind!

The chilly winter had sent a heavy frost as a forerunner to warn those who had failed on their farms that it would show no favors to the poorly clad. The landlord had given notice on the plantation that because of the short crops and the very low price of cotton that he could not advance money as he had done before. Furthermore, he had about decided that he wanted no one on his plantation who could not work a full farm. An application had been sent in during the summer for the place which Frank had left, and the application was from one of Frank's supposed friends, who had informed the landlord all about his leaving and declared that he would never return to the farm again, which up to the present had proven true. It was not so serious with the rest as it was with Mrs. Alston. While they all seemed to be sorry for her no one could sympathize with her, save old Aunt Adeline, whose husband was sold to slave traders twenty years before the Civil War, and her advice was: "Betty, you had better pray, child, for your husband has done left you for good." The advice was gladly received and tended to encourage and strengthen the faith that she had in the Christ whom she had learned to love and trust from her tenth year until now.

Early one morning, after having wrestled with the Angel of Faith for means of support in her poverty-stricken condition, her prayers were answered. She had spent the first part of that cold

night in prayer, while the earth without was robing herself with a garment of white. The barrel had been robbed of its last dust of flour to make a small cake for her supper, which she ate, and drank a glass of water, meanwhile tears fell gently from her eyes, then, in deep meditation, she sat before a glowing fire whose light threw her huge shadow upon the wall making the appearance of a ghost. The only comfort she had, if not a discomfort, was little Raymond, who occupied an old fashioned cradle at her right, and acted as if he were not to be slighted, for he yelled so loudly all at once that it interrupted her meditation, then she quickly seized him and said: "Hush boy, or your papa will not love you." Then she waited as if to listen for his footsteps at the door. But, alas, no sound was heard save that of the falling snow. She wept aloud. Then hurrying to bed, she failed to kneel at the bedside to pray, as her custom was, for the prayer was too long. The amen had not been reached when she fell to sleep a short while before day, and when she awoke the words of the petition were still lingering upon her lips as though she had not slept. Taking advantage of the little boy's morning nap, she hurried to the well for a bucket of water. Much to her surprise she found Mr. Lawson at the well—the wealthy landlord of the plantation on which she was living—who had made a fire in his stove and was preparing to fill his kitchen buckets with water, then go to her house to deliver a message from his wife.

"Betty," he said, "Mrs. Lawson and I have spent a very restless night solely on your account. We have every reason to believe you are indeed a very worthy woman, yet you have been deserted by a worthless man and, too, there is a child left to your care and no one to assist you."

She stood trembling before him as did that woman who had touched the garments of Christ and was made whole.

"Mrs. Lawson," he continued, "Says that your grandfather was her Uncle Joe's carriage driver and she can't help feeling sorry for you, so we have decided to let you have the house in our yard and your board and pay you \$4 per month to cook for us. Now, if you will accept this proposition, we will move you today."

This, in some respects, resembles the case of the Samaritan woman who met the Saviour at Jacob's well, and, after listening to His words of wisdom, perceived that He was a prophet, ran away, leaving her water pot. Poor Betty did not tell him that she would consider the proposition, neither did she carry her bucket full or empty to her house. She wept so loudly that Mrs. Lawson was moved with sorrow and came out of the old mansion and accompanied her home and bore little Raymond back in her own arms, while the mother brought the cradle on her shoulder and placed it in the kitchen. Breakfast was soon prepared and over, but the new cook failed to eat for she had meat of

which they knew not. While the hands moved her furniture, she was still praising Him for the answered prayer. She blessed over and over Aunt Adeline for having advised her in that old fashioned way to pray. She thought what a glorious privilege it is to have one who could be touched with the feelings of one in sorrow. How, just last night, she had dusted her barrel and this morning she has many barrels at her disposal. The more she thought of her new surroundings the more she felt like weeping. Despite of all that, somehow it would occur to her, "What if Frank would come home now; couldn't I make him happy?"

Ere the close of the day the news has suddenly been flashed over the whole community, as if by wireless telegraphy, of Betty's new home, but no one seemed to be responsible for the circulation. Then the talk: "What will poor Betty do with the little boy?" had suddenly changed into, "Its a good thing that he has gone. She will certainly do well now for every one knows that Mrs. Lawson is a good woman, only she is a little close with what she has."

Here Mrs. Alston spent three very pleasant yet very laborious years. Never before had it entered her mind that she would be forced to cook, wash and iron for her own support, much less that of her family. The jolly good days upon the farm of her girlhood had left a fondness that could hardly be gratified elsewhere. The more she listened to

the humming bees, the twittering birds, the singing of the boys and girls and, too, occasionally the trembling yet musical voices of the elder people as they chanted the good old spiritual songs that were sung at church, which songs she had not the privilege of singing in the choir as of old, the more she longed for the liberty that the farm afforded. This longing must be gratified at any cost. When she told Mrs. Lawson six months before the end of the year that she would not burn out her eyes over the hot stove any more after that year, it was received as an idle tale. But there was no persuasion so strong, no argument so plausible, as to change her mind, for she was resolved to return to the cotton fields.

On Christmas eve morning, when she presented herself for a settlement, Mr. Lawson attempted to employ her to fill the place another year, which she had held with credit and to the entire satisfaction of his wife for more than three years. But she refused on the grounds that she preferred to work on the farm. Thinking that if he offered her no work on the farm after the holidays were over that she would return to her former occupation. But the sun did not make its way across the heavens, leaving the earth in darkness, before this woman was employed on another plantation three miles away. There she began life anew.

CHAPTER II.

HIS FIRST SCHOOL EXPERIENCE.

MANY a mother in the rural districts has made sacrifices for their children's schooling, and if they were told, would sound fictitious. If Mrs. Betty Alston would head the list her place would be that of merit and not of favor. In those dark days of ignorance and superstition among her people, she stood ready to join in with the few men who were equally as anxious about their sons and daughters, to better the school conditions. There was no meeting of the public for the consideration of the education of the children but that she was not present, not as a silent witness but as a ready speaker, for she would often address the audience upon the school affairs as she saw it, and showed the necessity of lengthening the school term from three to six months. Furthermore, she would be among the first to pay her son's tuition in advance. Whatever this boy amounts to in the future we must not forget that in the background there was a mother.

At the age of six Raymond became a student in the public school. The announcement of the opening of school had been made at church on Sunday which fully settled it in his mind as a fact. It was a problem, however, before going, how one

man could teach so many children, for, as he understood the matter, every child in the whole world was to be there. He had asked his mother about every boy and girl that he could think of, and she said that all of the children were going, and that he must ask no more questions, but wait until tomorrow. It was a long time to wait, thought he.

His bed hour having arrived two hours too soon, he was soon on his knees at his mother's command to repeat the Lord's prayer which he had forgotten. A few spansks from the strong hand of his mother served to drive the words farther from his recollection. The present company, seated in the yard, discussing the preacher and teacher, which conversation had become so heated that it saved him from a good flogging, so he was rushed to bed. Sleep failed to take possession of him at once, so it was not until that noisy band had dispersed at 11 o'clock, before he fell to sleep. He was haunted all night with dreams of the events of the next day. On being aroused at sunrise that bright August morning, he was as anxious for this new experience as he was a few hours before.

It was his good fortune to fall into the hands of a large girl whose parents occupied a portion of the house in which he lived. The pair set out for the school house about two miles distant. On the way Raymond thought of a hundred and one more questions to ask Isabelle, but they proved to be the hardest questions that she ever attempted to answer,

and finally ended by saying that she did not know. Very soon their vision was met by a large crowd of gay boys and girls. The little lad quickened his pace and gazed at them with astonishment. His hat was under his left arm and the old blue-back speller was in one hand, while his lunch basket was in the other, as he paced first in and out of the bypath that led to the schoolhouse door. There were tall long leaf and old-field pines standing irregularly over a triangular five-acre spot, and the new school building was located near its center, and as the lively boys were dodging around those trees, some were climbing and sliding down, others were swinging and "skinning the cat" on the branches located near the trunk of the trees, Raymond's attention was attracted by this curiosity, and he paused a moment to interpret its meaning. Just as Isabelle was about to enter the school building, she looked around for her little companion, much to her surprise, she beheld him fifty feet behind her firmly stationed in the path with his eyes and mouth open, gazing upon these boys in dismay. So absorbed was he in what he saw, that he had even forgotten his own name, for, as she squalled almost to the top of her voice at him, attracting the attention of the other children all over the school ground, he remained as immovable as a statue. She retraced her tracks, quickly snatching him from his location, and led him into the school building.

They had scarcely entered the building before a very stout man entered the opposite door. He wore a pleasant smile on his face despite the intense heat that seemed to be against him and brought perspiration freely upon his brow. He had magnetic influence over that noisy crowd, for with his presence the noise died away and they marched in behind him two by two. What cared they for song books as the most of them knew by heart, "Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross?" With a sound of this familiar song they filled the breeze, and as its melody echoed and re-echoed over every hill and dale near by, falling softly on the ears of their neighbors, they too, took their seats under the shade trees in their yards and joined in the chorus.

The old scholars did not need any examination for they began where they had stopped four months previous. It was only necessary for the teacher to assure them that he had the same amount of strength to add to the occupant that stood in the right corner—pointing to a dozen of seasoned switches left from last term—and they (switches) had no respect of persons. Many of the old scholars had indelibly inscribed upon their person marks that served as a reminder of what he had done, and fearing that no change had taken place in his temper and no new method of punishment had entered his mind, they began to study their lessons before he could outline his work for the new term.

Before he could turn his attention to the new

scholars, some three dozen or more to begin with their alphabets, about 10 o'clock it had somehow occurred to one member of this large class that it was noon. There sat in one corner a little bashful boy, yet somewhat brave, who seemed to be intensely interested in an object that belonged to himself, that none else need concern themselves about. The teacher had asked all this new class to open their books for the assignment of their lesson, which he would explain in a few moments, when one of the pupils burst out in boisterous laughter unexpectedly. This so excited the passion of their schoolmaster that he quickly approached the corner already pointed out. But before he had time to flog that one there were twenty or more who had joined in the laughter, and all were pointing their finger in the other corner at the little fellow who had opened his basket and was eating his lunch. Mr. Duckett's temper failed him and his face too broadened with a smile. When he inquired of this little boy's name more than a dozen said "Raymond."

"March out for ten minutes recess, boys to the right, girls to the left. March—one, two, three, four. Right, left, right, left." During this conversation Raymond had not moved.

When his teacher who now held a private conversation with him asked why he would eat his lunch without permission, met the reply, "I thought it was dinner time cause I heard a horn blow." There had unfortunately come near the school

building a fox hunter, who blew his horn to keep his dogs together, and was responsible for the interruption of the school work.

The rest of the day passed without a single interruption. Raymond began with his A B C's where he had the unpleasantness of dwelling for six weeks. He appeared to have had a special fondness for them as no punishment from the hand of his teacher seemed to avail. Whenever it was reported at his home that he received punishment at school, why his mother felt that it was her duty to add another one, which she cheerfully did. The school term ended without his promotion. He had only two reputations among his schoolmates; one was that he would not or could not learn, and the other that none of the boys his size and age could throw him the "best two out of three."

A month and a half in a crowded school room of one hundred pupils under the instruction of one teacher, gives a very poor or practically no opportunity for a six-year old child to demonstrate his ability to learn; and less to show signs of a great man whose mission was to lead his comrades to a higher standard. Four years came bringing the unfavorable and apparently unchanged conditions so far as lengthening the school term or adding another teacher, which was so much needed. Nevertheless, during these last short terms, Raymond made some upward strides that were astonishing to many in his class. Besides ascending and descend-

ing from foot to head in his spelling class from "baker to compressibility" in the old blue-back speller, he won some reputation and notoriety as a speaker. He was very fond of speaking and never missed a Friday afternoon to speak. His ability to memorize was unparalleled in the whole school. Often he would commit his afternoon speech of some dozen or more stanzas on the morning of the same day that he was to speak, and would rarely make a blunder in his delivery. The student body was always delighted whenever he mounted upon the old bench to speak. Their faces would broaden with a smile whenever his name was called, and every eye would be centered upon him as he would cheerfully march to the stand, for he would never fail to cut some figure or disfigure his face if his teacher's eye was not upon him, which action would always bring its desired results—disorder.

However gifted or brilliant one may chance to be, he will not always show wisdom to rely wholly upon that talent without needed forethought or preparation that should accompany this unusual gift. A lesson that is best learned from experience to which this little character would gladly testify.

During these eventful, days when Raymond's fame was at its zenith, he unfortunately slept a day, and when he awoke, his teacher, at the beginning of an afternoon session commanded, that all books be laid aside. He began with the lowest grade and called them out one by one to speak, to which call

they ready and willingly responded. It was understood that every scholar was to speak, unless he or she had obtained an excuse a day beforehand after a scrutinizing examination of the cause presented him in ones favor. Raymond had not complied with any of these conditions, and in this crisis he could recollect no speech save the ones that he had previously spoken, and to repeat any one of these meant his coat. "Time and tide wait for no man," was fully realized by Raymond. Every moment left one less and ere he had time to decide what to do his name was called. The whole crowd turned in their seats as he arose with an unusual appearance, as there was no smile on his face, no wink of the eye, for his countenance had failed and attracted the attention of his companions, which would have changed their smiles and gained their pity and sympathy had it not been for a naughty boy sitting near him who understood the trouble, and burst out in an undertone sniggle, and brought back the smiles upon the faces of the scholars. When, with the dignity of a statesman, he ascended the old bench, which was to leave an impression upon him for life, it seemed to him that every one was making a face at him. There was silence for a moment, yea, for five moments, so that a pin would have produced a sound if dropped upon the floor almost equal to that produced by an upset chair in an empty room. "What shall I do?" thought he, to repeat means a whipping, and "If I recite that stanza that none has ever recited it will

reflect upon the teacher and will mean even more," were the thoughts revolving over and over in his mind. He was confronted with the most difficult problem of his life. "I will open my mouth and whatever comes will have to come" was his final conclusion. He tremblingly gazed at the large man who was leaning upon his switch at his left, as if waiting his signal, recognizing the look gave a nod to proceed. Raymond proceeded as follows:

"A monkey sitting on the end of a rail,
Picking his tooth with the end of his tail.
Mulberry leaves and calico sleeves,
All school teachers are hard to please."

He made the speech of his life. There were no wild cheers full of enthusiasm to rend the air when he had finished as he had been applauded on other occasions. But on the other hand there was a wild yell from the speaker as he received the merciless blows from the rod in the teacher's hand, which hastened him from the memorable spot where he had often won honor. This is the second time that the school had been dismissed on his account. He marched out with that sympathetic crowd to return no more. There was to come a change in his family connections that would serve to turn the trend of his life and threaten his future destiny as if to forever destroy the hope of such a bright and useful career which he was destined to live.

CHAPTER III.

HOW HIS BIRTHDAY PARTY ENDED.

THE cotton fields on the morning of the twenty-seventh of October were as significant as they appeared ten years ago. The forests present their usual golden colors, and one by one their leaves loosened their hold, never to renew it, and fluttered on the air till they reached their destiny, while the trunk of the trees had arrayed themselves in their fall silvery garment. The sun shone in its fullest strength, dispelling every speck of cloud from the heavens. There could be heard, far and near, the musical voices of children as they hurried to pick their task of cotton, by noon, or at least by 2 o'clock in the afternoon. They must by all means be at the home of Raymond long before sunset. Chickens had made themselves scarce around Mrs. Alston's house, after beholding eleven heads separated from bodies which they once guided. Every nest had been robbed of its contents to make cakes and pies. Yet the birthday party for children would be incomplete without the sweet potato custard, thought Raymond, whereupon he went to the potato patch and brought back a peck without his mother's command. His Aunt Silvia had spent the night with his mother and they had talked over

the event which they were to celebrate—its tenth year, the next day. Many had been their peculiar experiences during this decade, but He who fore-knows the destiny of every individual had brought them safely through.

At 5 o'clock in the afternoon there were children coming from almost every direction, and they ceased not to come until the sun was about to veil his face in the West. The whole neighborhood was well represented, for there was scarcely a home that was not represented by a child or an elder person. The noise of this crowd was easily heard, on such a still night, for some two or more miles, and had the custom prevailed that every person was duty bound to bring a present, Raymond could have easily set up a small mercantile business.

The crowd here is too large to get into one room, even though forty could be seated around the tables, but children in those days must have delighted in waiting their turn, for all of the old people were seated at the first table, save those who were in corners discussing the encouraging outlook of the cotton market.

The Silver Queen of Night was admired for her brightness, for she seemed not to be flooding the earth with the borrowed light of the sun, but was dazzling every eye as with her own. What cared these little people for this unusual bright night, only that it favored them in their play.

Could they appreciate its beauty any farther than enjoying their play in its brightness? But they were not the only persons in the world, however, that were appreciating and admiring its beauty. There were hearts unknown to them, one at least that was throbbing with unutterable joy, as an old carriage drew nearer and nearer that house with every revolution of its wheels. Yea, it was throbbing faintly, too, for there were only a few more strokes to be made ere the silver cord be loosed.

Unexpectedly there stopped at the door a carriage, with closed curtains, presenting the appearance of an ambulance, drawn by a gray horse, the sight of which calmed the noisy crowd and left them huddled here and there in dismay.

Raymond, at the appearance of this strange sight, rushed into the house to inform the old folk that there were strangers at the door, and his uncle quietly answered the call, while the rest continued to chat and destroy the contents of the table. The driver whispered something to Elbert and he returned, not to the door out of which he had come, but to the door that led into the bed-room, where he found three of the guests who had been excused that they might engage in a private conversation. He explained in a low tone something to them, meanwhile there fell from his eyes great drops of water. Having delivered this startling message, he returned quickly toward the door, and the three

men left their seats and hastily followed him. Quickly, yet as tenderly and carefully as if they were handling a child, they drew from behind the curtains a man and carried him into the bed-room and the carriage withdrew.

CHAPTER IV.

THE END HAD COME.

THERE was a time when news was not flashed over the electric wires of this country, and too, it was an epoch as full of news worth the knowing as now, much of which, if it had been known in its fullness, was calculated to inspire and ennoble the youth of that period as that of this worthy and history-making age in which you and I are favored to live. Then there were broken-hearted wives and grieved mothers numbered among earthly mortals, as there are now, who implored the good will and sympathy of the tender hearted. But, despite the unfavorable circumstances of any period in the world's history, many of the people have been prepared to meet its disadvantages.

The consternation that seized the guests at Raymond's home last night by the house of a near-by neighbor being on fire, possibly saved a greater terror at his home. After most all of this crowd had quickly withdrawn to that large building which was going up in flames and smoke, the rest of the guests were quietly gathered around the bedside to behold another house dissolve.

His face had lost its color, which was once admired for its handsome appearance, and pre-

sented a weary and tiresome look. His eyes, which were once so suggestive when centered upon an object, were now occupying a sunken recess under his projecting brow and their light was dimly shining. The large hands that had so often soothed the tiny hands of a lovely wife had lost their flesh and were now reduced to bones, thinly covered with a diseased skin. He had been propped up in the bed, and there were some two or three fanning him, as if to keep the light aglow a little longer, while he was gasping for breath. Meanwhile there appeared through the door from the adjoining room, a medium size woman, borne on the arm of a stout man, wringing her hands and with sobs so softly, as if not to fret him, that would have melted the hardest heart, whose pulsation was brought to a standstill, only when she had reached the bedside of that long lost one who was so near and dear to her heart. She had promised her sister Silvia that she would not part her lips to him, fearing that it might tend to intensify the agony through which he was unwillingly passing.

She kept her word, but her lips parted at their own volition and her voice rang out once more, enunciating that name which sounded like music in her ears, "My God! Frank, is that you?" The dying man revived at the sound of that familiar voice, which he had not heard for ten years and six months. He was not dying, thought he, or if

so, he had received an electric shock by the sound of that voice to which he must respond

He faintly opened his eyes in the presence of those who looked upon him wistfully and they lighted upon a little woman arrayed in a white costume at his side—who to him had the appearance of an angel—and he recognized that she was his own wife. He had only two desires which he attempted to gratify; one to beg her forgiveness and the other to see his child. Whereupon he vainly put forth an effort to sit up, but his strength had departed. Then he faintly reached forth his right hand towards her, which she firmly grasped, and he opened his mouth to call her name, yet no sound was heard, but his quivering lips made signs so clearly that they read the name "Betty" which his tongue failed to utter, and the light of that house flickered at the attempt as if it were the last piece of timber to support it, and went out.

The news of the fire and the death of Frank Alston, long before the dawn of day, furnished an interesting subject and was discussed in almost every home ten miles around. The funeral was largely attended the next day and there was much sympathy shown Mrs. Alston. Even though the preacher was on a trial, because no one could hardly believe that this man was saved who had been condemned by the whole neighborhood for his malicious treatment of one of the best girls in that vicinity, proved himself equal to the occasion

when he gave warning from the text: "Rejoice, O, young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

CHAPTER V.

FRIENDSHIP LEADS TO LOVE.

THE bereaved family had well nigh forgotten the late death of that prodigal son whom they had long given up as dead, save his wife. She was wearing her veil with no thought of ever changing her name again, long after the old bachelors and widowers began calling, who claimed to have been calling for the purpose of cheering and consoling her. This proved to the contrary, however, in a short while. One of that number, while the minister at the cemetery was tenderly saying "earth to earth," kept his eyes upon the widow, and it was by no means a sympathetic gaze, but rather one of admiring fondness, which seemed to have been full of future hope and anticipation. Before they turned their backs on the last remains, this same man was at Mrs. Alston's side, exercising every muscle of his strong hand in aiding her brother in bearing her fainting form to the carriage.

The tendency of humanity is that of gradually withdrawing from a bereaved family for the first few days, as if to leave them to sorrow alone, and then return when the deepest grief has been undergone. Very often when we most need encouragement and sympathy from our friends they are far-

thest from us. Then we are most apt to gladly accept sympathy from those who are not our friends. When this sorrowing wife was drinking from that cup of bereavement, there was only one who seemed willing to add to her comfort, and he failed not in giving her encouragement out of his own experience, for he had likewise received a similar stroke from the Almighty about five months before. He held to the opinion that Providence did only those things which were best for His creatures, and if they would leave it all to Him they would finally see that it was for their good.

Not that she missed the care and protection that Frank had given her for the last ten years of his life, but it was the unexpected and sudden death that caused her grief. Whether he had accepted the Christ in whom she had so long confided was unknown, thus she was left to wait the final day. His whereabouts, for so long, was still a mystery, for no intelligence had been received more than he landed from a southbound train, borne by four men while lying upon a cot, and was placed in charge of a hackman. She tried to imagine what he wanted to tell her before he fell asleep. But the greatest grief after all was that he never looked into the face of his only child, which she could never forget.

She was turning over these thoughts, one by one in her mind, when she was interrupted by a tap at the door.

Raymond answered the call and ushered in Mr. Anthony, who made an unusual bow to the widow, whose melancholy appearance drew tears from the spring of his eyes, and the little boy moved his study, consisting of three books, into the next room. So frequently had been his visits, and especially when she first received the stroke, that she had somehow began to expect and was always pleased to welcome him; too, there was nothing withheld from him, so she now briefly rehearsed the subject of her meditation when he knocked at the door, and assured him that she would never be able to give up her Frank. This statement gave him an opportunity to speak for himself, and who can make better use of such an opportunity than an old widower! He at once began to discuss the providence of God. He soon convinced her that Providence had removed the barrier that stood between her and the real happiness that awaited her at the hands of another. He had had such clear evidences that he was the one to give her this happiness, that he had not missed a single opportunity of rendering her any needed assistance within his power since the day of her bereavement.

He had fully made known to her the source from which all these unexpected favors had sprung, and left it to her to decide, hoping that she would decide in the affirmative. When she bade him good night she failed to return and close the door at once as on other occasions. The heavens were

aglow and each star, as she beheld them, shone more brilliantly than ever. Having moved a short space from her, his attention, too, was curiously attracted upwards, and he exclaimed: "What a beautiful night." "Indeed, I was just thinking," she added. "Ah! our minds seem to run together," he said, as he reluctantly plodded homeward. She had turned to enter the door, when she quickly looked around to make out a strange light that shone about her. The heavens that were so beautiful a few moments ago now seemed to be on fire. It proved, however, to be a light from a falling meteor. Thinking that she was perplexed over this strange phenomena, he turned and raised his voice so that it might carry the message distinctly and said: "It's nothing but a falling star." She said tenderly, "I hope you are not afraid," and closed the door.

CHAPTER VI.

AN UNHAPPY HOME.

COUNTLESS ages in the affairs of the human family are effected as mother earth revolves around the sun. Each of the four seasons is busy with its own events. Each of us is concerned with our peculiar interests as these different seasons come and go. Sometimes they bring sorrow, and again there comes with them joy. At times we assert that life is not worth living, and if live we must, we will live alone, be it the life of a bachelor, old maid, widower, or widow. All of these resolutions are but evidences that we do not know ourselves.

Mrs. Alston thought that for her to live now was only to live for her fatherless son. The sun had shone upon one man who had found favor in her eyes, but he had proven to her that all men were but reproductions of his worthless self, which forever hardened her against them.

She could never forget the unusual kindness of Mr. Anthony, who seemed to have taken special delight in calling by twice a week to learn if things went well with them. It was quite a sacrifice on his part to leave his three motherless children all alone in his house, some two or three times

a week, yet there are times when such sacrifices bring a two-fold blessing. Be it a blessing or a curse, time is the only revealer. Philosophers have perplexed their minds and puzzled their brains until their heads have become frosty, searching into human needs, striving to decide whether it is better to live without a companion or to follow what the good book seems to teach. They most invariably reach the conclusion that it is wisdom to leave each individual to determine for himself.

Mrs. Alston had that kind of dictation to which it was not hard for her to yield. She had long wanted him in whom her soul delighted, to come directly to the point where one yea from her would settle it and set at rest two minds that had been restless since he gave the first hint. But he had to learn anew. It was talked so frequently that the people expected their marriage at any time; thus he shook off his fear and suggested the idea that they meet the expectation of the people, to which she willingly agreed. The setting sun, throwing back its golden rays upon the windows of the old mansion on the hill, only reflected its light to leave a reminder of those words falling so tenderly from the lips of the minister, which made two hearts beat as one. No Sabbath had closed with such a benediction, thought the happy pair.

None can, with certainty, predict the future of two persons thus beginning life anew. Every couple must work out their own destiny or allow it to work

out itself. Here comes together two sets of children, not totally strangers and, too, strangers as to customs and habits of their home life. Three had lived a short while without a mother and one had never known the care of a father. Each child looked for faults in the other, while the father and mother were not free from the same expectation. A few days and less than a week had passed before the children had suffered blows from the hands of each other, which of course demanded the special attention of their parents, who did not fail to correct them. But that home never had the light of affection any more, until one member of the family found a dwelling in other parts. Two years were long enough for this household to stand united, and how it stood that long no one but the Almighty can tell. The disagreeable stepfather and thoughtless mother had allowed the neighbors to expect the worse at any hour. Raymond had more than once prayed for death to end his earthly existence. He finally persuaded his mother to allow him to go away and labor, agreeing to give her half of his earnings. Thus, at the early age of fourteen, he was allowed to go forth and try life for himself.

It is too sad to see a boy going away from a mother's care at such an early age, yet the world today has thousands of such pitiful sights in the country and cities. Had it not been for the training of that sainted mother, his life might have been

wrecked. He worked upon the farm, at mills, and all kinds of public work, and in company with many bad characters. He had well nigh decided to give up those lofty ideas of being a man when the words of his Sunday School superintendent, "Be true to your purpose," came to him. He tried to be true, but unfortunately he had learned to play "chucks," without his mother's knowledge, and it was hard for him to stand around the fire at a country frolic and see his friends lose almost every time the banker pulled his cup. Being quite fifty miles from home, too far for his mother to learn of his fault, he fell upon his knees and got into the game, and in five minutes he had won ten dollars, which broke the banker. This gave him quite a reputation and possibly he would have followed this practice had not illness summoned him to the bedside of his mother.

He now renews the old idea of entering school, and thus, upon the first day of the New Year of his fifteenth year, he entered a village normal school about fifteen miles north of his home. Having no knowledge of what it cost to be a student, especially a boarding student, he carried the small sum of fifteen dollars, which was all he had. He was immediately assigned to a room near the campus among that class of boys who did their own cooking, where he remained for one month. His lack of sufficient clothes was largely responsible for his having contracted cold which terminated

in pneumonia. This illness which laid its cruel hand upon this over anxious lad after he had been a student for one month held him for six weeks. He was removed to his home and never entered school again for five years.

CHAPTER VII.

PREPARATION FOR COLLEGE.

THE doctor dismissed his patient after six weeks careful attention with the injunction: "Take special care of yourself, my boy, lest there be a relapse". The chilly winds of winter had exchanged places with those of March. There could be heard far and near the gee and haw of the ploughman. The smoke from the fields, as the bush and litter were consumed by fire, could be seen ascending heavenward, slightly obstructing the light of the sun. Raymond was so anxious to secure a job from which he hoped to realize a sufficient sum to reenter school, that he hired himself out before he was able to work by three weeks, for five dollars per month for six months and three lessons per week.

Money did not come fast enough to assure him a year's schooling at the end of that time, so he seized a new opportunity to supplement his income. There was no little demand for soft drinks, especially when the hot ones could not be easily obtained; then, too, there was no prohibition against the former. The people in the country knew nothing of coca-cola and the like, but everybody seemed to be fond of apple cider. Raymond

began the sale and did an unusually lively business, especially on Sunday. He seemed not to have thought that this was one of the ways that appeared right, but the end meant trouble, until his Sunday school teacher told him that it was a step to blind tiger dealing. He gave his word that he would never be guilty of such a crime but his word fell to the ground. Scarcely had two months passed ere he was secretly dealing with the "hot tea". A friend of his mother informed her of his downward drift and she hastened to his rescue. And fortunately, too, for less than a fortnight spies seized two gallons from two of his companions and brought them before the magistrate who were found guilty and were made to pay one hundred dollars for violation of the law.

He went to the railroad next spring despondent and discouraged, because his efforts to begin his education thus far had failed. Each year he was falling farther and farther behind in his classes. He had thirty dollars the previous fall which would have probably carried him through the term if he had known how to manage. He spent five years in succession preparing to enter school at the end of which he still was not prepared. Whenever he saved fifty or more dollars he would spend it foolishly. He would pay twenty-five dollars for a suit of clothes, five dollars for shoes, three dollars for a hat, five dollars for shirts, six dollars for underwear, two dollars for cuffs, and collars, two dollars

for ties, then send his mother a dress, and of course present his best girl with a five dollar present. Then he would lament over his failure and disdain the idea of a young man attempting to educate himself. No one, he thought, ought to become a student if he could not dress well and keep in society before going to college. In fact, it cost so much to stay in line that one¹ could not secure an education unless his parents paid the bills.

He now chanced to attend an association where he heard a man speak in interest of a college of wide reputation, who made a lasting impression upon him. As he held his audience spell-bound, there was one statement of Prof. Newman that set Raymond wild. Prof. Newman eloquently said: "I have the honor of representing an institution that is giving to the world a class of young men and women of whom we are not ashamed. When they shall have graduated from Oakland College we will give them our unqualified endorsement and guarantee that they will compete in the class room, in business, in the pulpit and in general appearance with students from any college in this country; and I have no fear of their character reflecting dishonor on their alma mater. We do not ask you to send us any flower girls or dude boys. But we ask for the girl and boy who want an education. Let them come to Oakland College money or no money. If a boy wants an education and has no money but has the will, send him to us, for

it is not money that he needs but it is the will."

This opened the way for this despondent young man. He had spent almost five years getting ready for the class room and had made as poor a headway as the frog that struggled to make his exit from a well fifty feet deep by climbing up two and six-eighths feet by day and falling back two and seven-eighths feet by night. Raymond was striving for what he thought he needed most—money, but he now learns that he possessed what he most needed—the will. Still no one ever encouraged him to start with what he had. Oh, how thoughtless our people are about our struggling youth! How many at our doors are making strenuous efforts to educate themselves and yet we fail to lend them our support. Raymond's friends had allowed him to work for a long time in vain, when probably one word might have caused him to reach the goal sooner in life. On this occasion Raymond made himself known to Prof. Newman, and enrolled his name as a student of Oakland College.

CHAPTER VIII.

COLLEGE EXPERIENCE.

FEW boys leaving the country, from which the men who stir the world have often come, ever attracted more attention and gave rise to more strange comment than Raymond. His mother said but little to others concerning his leaving, and less to her husband, who had often told her that the boy would go astray. His three children had always had the protection and tender care of his home, yet two of them had abused these privileges, leaving him hopeful of the youngest, who seemed to have but little or no ambition. Mr. Anthony noticed with peculiar interest the many failures of his stepson's people, and especially his father's, whom he imitated so much. Mrs. Anthony lived a life of hope and believed that by her prayers her son would accomplish much. The people upon the old plantation discussed his new undertaking pro and con. Many said that he wanted to shun the field; some said that he wanted to make money easily, while others said he wanted to be a minister for the honor of the position. To their minds there seemed to have been two things against him, viz: He was too old to be educated and he had no way of securing enough money to finish a course should he begin it.

Finally the day appointed arrived when he was to bid farewell to the old plantation upon which he had made many a track. One of his friends drove up in time for him and his trunk, and in the presence of twenty more of his playmates he bade each adieu with a hearty handshake until he came to two aged women. One wept as she threw her arms about him; the other, whose head was almost as white as the cloth that covered those hoary locks, swung about his neck and reluctantly loosed him after sixty seconds. "My boy, take care of yourself," were her last remarks; which touched a responsive chord in him that never ceased to vibrate. They were soon conveyed out of sight, but the mother looked in the direction of their departure long after the sound of the wagon had died away. Thirteen miles were soon driven. He received a letter from the post-office, on reaching the village, from the president of Oakland College to the effect that if he would come at once he would be given a job that would pay at least half of his tuition. The message was gladly received, for at that moment he was not in possession of enough money to pay his first month's tuition.

He arrived at Oakland College, which was located at the capitol of one of our Southern States, in four hours after leaving his home town. His appearance was a unique example of a green "stickman." His coat sleeves were some distance from his wrist and his trousers had but little fellow-

ship with his low quarter shoes. His clothes in no respect appeared as if they were intended for him. But one or two things were in his favor; he could make friends and take jokes. He was assigned with a good chum and things went well in their room, and his work was done with ease and to the entire satisfaction of the president. When he had fully settled for work he had only two cents left of the six dollars that made the sum total of what he possessed when he left home.

Raymond decided to stand near if not at the head of his classes. This was indeed a lofty idea. It is easier to possess such an ambition than it is to do the necessary work to merit this distinction. This fact was fully realized when he was thrown into a class of thirty, in the second year in English, most of whom were brought up in the city graded schools, which were taught by some of the best teachers in the state. His average standing for the first term was 78 per cent, just 3 per cent above pass mark. He began the second term with a double resolution, but it only showed that if he did no better the third term he would be compelled to repeat the work.

He very soon felt called to the ministry, and inasmuch as it was a calling for which a man should sacrifice everything, he did not see the wisdom of undertaking to complete any course, but thought he should take a nearer cut to his calling. He immediately called upon the president of the

institution and laid the matter squarely before him. Out of many years of observation and experience the old Gamaliel persuaded the young man to pursue the college course until completed. He endeavored to lay before him the great possibility of accomplishing very much more by going to the top and the probability of accomplishing but little or nothing by stopping just as he was laying a foundation in the English department for a higher education. After receiving similar advice for a few days from the president, the young man returned to his studies with a renewed effort.

Having received license to preach before leaving school, the temptation to seek a church and get out into the world was intensified. His vacations were now spent in teaching and preaching here and there, and that without much compensation. While he was loved by the pastors, his ability as a preacher was not manifested when he secured an appointment to any marked degree. The people heard him gladly because their pastors saw, as they said, great things resulting from his future labors, but they were too far in the future to be seen by the people. These pastors evidently had a vision, for all and even more than they predicted was seen in less than a decade by the people. Neither were the people the only ones blind at first, for Raymond declared after a failure in the pulpit on one occasion, before a large crowd, that he had surely answered the other fellow's call.

Experience, the greatest of all teachers, taught him a lesson that proved his salvation. He had given himself almost wholly to the study of his calling at the expense of neglecting his other studies, upon which his graduation depended. When the list of names of those who had satisfactorily finished the work that made them eligible to the graduating class was read before the school, his name was not read. He was not even on condition. He desired his class marks which were quickly furnished and to his surprise he had succeeded in averaging 67 per cent. His courage failed and his ambition ceased to aspire for higher attainments. It was obvious to him that there was no "royal road to learning." He had worked hard both night and day to enroll his name among those who were to receive the honors of the college on commencement day; he had worked harder to make himself worthy of the high calling of the pulpit, which work had received too much of his scant time to allow him a good class standing. Often he had been warned by his teacher, who manifested a deep interest in his welfare, and particularly in his class promotion, against the unwise and careless negligence of his studies, but he, like most of those over-anxious and short-sighted young licensed preachers who have been pulled too soon, felt that the world had need of him and that the King's business demanded haste. But this haste proved waste. He was compelled to repeat the year's

work. The experience of this one instance stamped upon his mind a lesson which time failed to deface.

But there was deeply woven in his nature a determination to succeed over difficulties and seeming failures. The year lost, after all was a year gained. Many a lesson had been passed over in form, but lost in reality. He was often heard to say: "I never thoroughly understood a lesson in detail before the year I repeated my work, and I would advise any student who desires to know a subject thoroughly to repeat it thrice if necessary." While it was difficult for him to grasp a subject, it was very easy for him to retain it. There was another difficulty confronting him. That was staying in school. A decade in college, and that self-supporting, is not an easy task for a young man who has not been reared in the city and acquainted with its environment, which doubtless might be used to one's advantage. It was even harder for Raymond, who had no city experience, to continue his studies for a dozen years self-supporting, nevertheless, he held on with that tenacity that served to make him a real man. While his drudgery work fully paid his tuition after the first few years, there were other necessities that drew in a telling effect on his pocket-book. He told his mother in a letter of his sad condition:

DEAR MOTHER: I have neglected writing for the last three months, because I was in need of sta-

tionery, but my affection for you grows daily. I have just finished washing my clothes and hung them up in my room to dry, as it is raining to-night. I received today a shirt and a pair of trousers from one of my teachers, so now I have two white shirts. The Lord is greatly supplying my needs. While my shoes and hat are looking old, I think they will last me until commencement, especially my hat, since I wear my cap most of the time.

Mother, please do not be over-anxious about my welfare. I have only four more years here now. Pray that God will in the future use me to advance His kingdom on the earth. Then I will not have labored in vain.

Your son,

RAYMOND.

In the busy rush of life time is upon wheels. The four years came around in so short a time that he hardly realized it. He looked back with pleasure mingled with sorrow over the years that lay in the back-ground. Many discomforts, disappointments and discouragements had been confronted by him, but they had only served as stepping stones upon which his weary feet ascended the college heights of his alma mater. The last examination had passed and he stood well in his class, despite the double duty of his school work and pastoring, in which he had been happily engaged for nearly one year. He thought over the many young men and women who had been in his classes from time to time, but all of them save ten had

fallen by the wayside. Much to his surprise, he was one of the chosen speakers, and he played well his part on commencement day. When he received that document assigned by the faculty which attested his character and qualifications were worthy of all that it stood for, he determined to lift it high and never allow his work or conduct to fling back any shadow on the old institution save that of honor. Having received through constant and laborious efforts his third diploma, he had that pride and distinction of having gotten the victory by his own toils, which should be the ambition and characteristic of every young man who would write his name upon the pages of history with those illustrious characters who have added to the development of their respective races. There was nevertheless that feeling that he was about to commence life anew. He leaves the halls of learning to take his place in the world among men, and each teacher as they anxiously watch their student's career is expecting that Raymond will stand foremost among them all.

CHAPTER IX.

PASTORING NEW HOPE.

AFTER commencement what, where and how are subjects full of thoughts that entertain every student. Providence had already opened the door of hope for Rev. Raymond Alston even before he had fully prepared for the duties common to his calling. He was serving a country church some forty miles from the college a year before his course was completed, but the time had come when he naturally looked forward to a larger field and his hopes were soon realized.

The first church at Yorkville became vacant on the first day of April of the same year that Raymond came out of college. The pastor of New Hope was by no means an ordinary man. It was his ability that placed him at the head of the dean department of one of the greatest theological seminaries of the West, a position made vacant by death. New Hope as a church occupied no second place among the other churches. Every prominent pastor in the state was inclined to visit this mourning church, not only to advise and aid in the securing of a pastor, but even to offer their own service. A pulpit committee was wisely appointed by the church which was composed of five of the

strongest and most judicious members. This committee put itself on the alert, yet it was not disposed to recommend just any one to this prominent church.

After having taken a careful survey over the state without finding a man to offer, the committee appointed one of its members to visit their state college during the closing exercises, with the view of finding a man. He was not to divulge his mission. He was favorably impressed with one of the young men on the campus whose deportment had won the good will and affection of the student body, and when one would chance to ask about the student preachers almost every student would speak of Raymond first. His oration on commencement day was not so eloquently delivered as some others, but his real earnestness won for him a place in the heart of Mr. Arnold, who upon his return cheerfully recommended him to the committee.

When little Marcel Williams gave the parson a letter marked Yorkville, on his return from the office, he was curious to know who was writing to him from that place. He was astonished when he found that the contents were an invitation from the pulpit committee of the first church of Yorkville desiring his services for the next Sabbath. He read the letter to Mrs. Williams with whom he was boarding. She quickly interpreted its meaning and prophesied to her husband, who was a deacon of

the little church that Raymond pastored, and said: "The Reverend is going to leave us." A woman can foresee coming events and their predictions are generally true.

The sun shone unusually bright the second Sunday in June and all nature seemed to have been in smiles. But the heart of one mortal was throbbing faintly with fear as it sent forth the blood through its restless body. He had seen in his imagination a large crowd seated before him with each eye firmly fixed upon him. The old bell sent forth her clear tones that morning and one seemed to linger as if giving the other time to hear its message before it would follow. The people soon came from every direction and had occupied their seats when the signal for preaching was heard. The door of the dressing room stood ajar and there stepped forth a puny man dressed in a black suit and sat in the center chair as directed by one of the two licensed preachers who accompanied him. He did not raise his head at first, but appeared to be engaged in silent prayer. The old organ was sending forth a beautiful prelude, pianissimo, when he slightly raised his head and his large eyes seemed to have taken in the whole congregation with one glance. When the crowd stood to sing the opening hymn, there were many straining their eyes to get a fair look into his face, yet their eyes were only satisfied when he was introduced and stepped forth and announced his text.

His preliminary was short. With fear he took his text, selecting John 3:16. Many were asking one to another, "Can he preach?" While some thought he could, others said that he could not. For twenty-five minutes he held their attention, and the whole audience experienced a strange feeling stealing over them. They went away exceedingly anxious to return at night.

He had done the best he could when the day's work was over. He went to his room that night with the consciousness of having been true to the spirit, even though he had failed to keep his rhetoric together and had unmercifully murdered two verbs to his recollection. There were many who congratulated him upon his two excellent sermons and assured him how much they had enjoyed them, but he had learned how to receive such praises. Two of the pulpit committee escorted him to the train the next morning and secured his consent to allow them to suggest his name to the church.

After three weeks he heard from the church. The membership became divided over the election of the pastor. Some of the preachers in the city had used their influence against his election on the grounds that he was inexperienced and unmarried. Four of the deacons had been offered twenty-five dollars each to work for another man who lived in the city and was familiar with the conditions of the church. The members turned out four hundred strong on the night of the election, and three-

fourths went for Raymond. He was at once notified, by special delivery of his election, and that the church desired his presence the following Sunday.

He had only a few books and a trunk to transfer. The very fact that he moved on Friday was "bad luck" said one old lady, who told him that he must pray much if he would stand against what was coming. He had the faith in God and attached nothing to chance. But when the four deacons, who opposed his election, offered their resignation the first day he entered upon his duties as pastor, he felt that he had made a poor beginning. He did not know how to fight his opponents. He had an idea that a pastor ought not be forced to fight to hold a church, neither ought he be unkindly disposed to his opposers. He had no one to whom he might carry the unpleasant affair for advice. Pastors of other churches in the city were only hoping that if any of the members should leave the old church that they might join theirs. Others who had no churches in charge were thinking if he had to resign there might be a chance for them. He had not been there long enough to know his friends, therefore he refrained from discussing his troubles with anyone.

After a few months he was rapidly gaining ground, until he refused to accept any more invitations to Sunday dinners. The young women were rivaling each other in preparing special dinners for him through their mothers. But when he publicly

announced that there must be no more special dinners for him on Sunday some of his best friends declared that he was too cranky.

He had scarcely regained his former standing, with the young women and mothers, before he had accumulated more trouble. On a special occasion he preached a temperance sermon in which he dealt a death blow to all whiskey drinkers. He had no doubt but that the strongest and most influential men of his church, and even that metropolis of the South, would bid him God's speed. He used the strongest terms in denouncing this great evil. He went far enough to say that "any drinking man would lie, steal, rob, and that he was unreliable and could not be depended upon to ever contend for the moral, intellectual and spiritual development of the people."

The very next day there was quite a stir among the people who heard the sermon. Many had longed for a fearless minister in that city which seemed to have been enslaved to the drink habit. But it never occurred to him that his congregation would be affected in the least until a committee waited upon him the following Monday evening and advised him to be a little more moderate in his denunciation of certain evils. He had insulted one of the trustees who stayed about "three sheets in the wind" most all of his time and he swore that he would never foot the church again.

Only one year had passed under his administration, but it was the most prosperous year in the history of the church. Over one hundred members had been added, some three thousand dollars raised and the congregation had greatly increased. The church now raised his salary which was a surprise to him. It had been the hardest year's work of his life but not without results.

There was a feeling pretty generally among the people that the pastor ought to occupy the parsonage where each member would be free in calling upon him. There were many girls in the church well qualified to care for his home. The women began at once to select him a suitable companion and many of the girls were thinking, "I ought to be the fortunate one". Yet he had not been asleep over this all important matter upon which his future career so largely depended. He committed his secret to the deacon board and to the family with whom he boarded. He had not only corresponded regularly with one of his classmates, but had paid her two visits that year and had secured the consent of her parents. The whole secret was broken one Sunday morning when the church clerk read the notice, then said: "I hold in my hand an invitation to the members and friends of this church". Silence prevailed and if the church floor had not been carpeted one might have heard the sound made by a falling pen. It proved to be an invitation to the wedding of their pastor and

Miss Maude who lived in Chesterfield one hundred and thirty-seven miles from Yorkville. There were many sad hearts, but none dare show signs of their regret.

There was much talk about the coming bride who was to become mistress of the parsonage. It was thought that she would not be able to win the affections of the people, as she was a stranger the people would be inclined to keep a distance. He arrived in the city at night accompanied by a party of ten, three of whom were his members. Despite the lateness of the hour there were scores waiting at the depot and everyone tried to catch a glimpse of the bride, who was dressed in a dark blue suit matched by a hat that partly disclosed the light from her blushing face. They were hurried to the parsonage where another crowd awaited to greet them. There the table was laden with dainties but their joy was full and their appetites could not be excited.

After the grand reception was over the next night, the pastor settled down to work. The madam soon adapted herself to the home and her pious disposition and her affectionate manner won for her the highest respect of the members, and they soon felt that she was one of them. Raymond was nevertheless conscious that some of the people did not care for him as they had hitherto appeared. He knew that he would no longer receive presents, which would naturally make him feel obligated to

different ones. He felt free to visit the members as never before. He could now bend all of his energy in developing the work, and that, too, without shunning homes or persons because of misunderstanding. He spent four and one-half years with this people but they were not years of ease. They were filled with anxiety for the fullest Christ-life for both pastor and people. He now enters into their sorrows and comforts alike. He always felt that "woe is me" if the people among whom and for whom he served are not continually growing more and more like their Master. Being over anxious to bring the people up in a few years to that standard to which individuals must grow, and not attain by bounds, he labored the more zealously. He was not able to win the four deacons who resigned their much loved positions. They were thorns in his flesh always presenting the hand of Esau in the peculiar upheavals of the church, but his ears never misunderstood the voice of Jacob. It was obvious to him that few pastors ever lead all of their people. He saw that many had drifted with the crowd and their hearts were far from the cause.

He saw many of his mistakes after five years yet he was proud of the stand he always took for the right. He was honored by his young people even though he had rendered himself, at times, offensive by attacking their card playing and dancing, etc. But they were enforced to endorse his

stand after a malicious murder of two of the prominent young men of the church at a private dance in the home of one of the upper tens. The disappearance in one year of five young women, two of whom were members of the choir, and the others were prominently connected with the auxiliaries of the church, whose whereabouts remained a mystery to everybody save their respective families. With all the criticism against his preaching and administration no one entertained the slightest doubt of his moral integrity. He had never backed down one iota from any principal if he believed it to be right, however strong the objection.

CHAPTER X.

ANSWERING THE CALL FROM OVER THE SEA.

FULLY five years are necessary to plant a pastor with a people, so that they may have that cemented love that is so essential for their largest usefulness. To sever these ties, when bound by that chord, each thread of which is made of genuine affection is unwise; yet no man looketh on the outward appearance. A voice from over the sea had been ringing in the ears of Raymond for many a year. The more he pondered and prayed over the seeming call, the clearer it pointed to him. He mustered up enough courage, one night after a successful service, to break the news to his wife. It was such a shock to her that it robbed her of a whole night's sleep.

By times the next morning she had breakfast prepared and her house in order. Then they drew their chairs up to a large center table in his study, and for two hours or more discussed this anticipated new field. She called to his mind the possibilities that lay before him, in this, his nativity. He was now pastoring the leading church of his state and his success had been far beyond all expectations. As a pulpit orator he was recognized as the best among his comrades. Honors had been

offered him which he declined and as it was obvious to her in a few years he would be a national character.

These unexpected words of praise from his wife were astonishing to him. Never before did he conceive that she entertained such a hope of him ascending these lofty heights based upon his ability and the unparralled success already attained. More than once he decided that in her estimation he was hardly an ordinary pastor, and less an impressive and persuasive preacher. Having now learned her estimation of him, he was more determined to become a foreign missionary. He assured her that his life's work anywhere, save on the foreign field, would be a failure. Therefore he decided to go at any cost. Believing it to be a call of the Lord, she affirmed that it was better to obey God than man. "For," said she, "whither thou goeth I will go, and whither thou lodgesth I will lodge, where thou dieth will I die, and there will I be buried."

He was bound to respect every duty that he owed the church, whereupon he made known the facts in a joint meeting of the deacons and trustees, numbering twenty-five, on the night of the same day that his wife decided to cast her lot with him. When he had discussed at length and in detail the accomplishment of New Hope under his administration, and had thanked them individually for their loyal support, without which success would have

lagged, then he made known his call to the foreign field and his decision to go. The whole board was smitten with awe on receiving this startling statement. The meeting was prolonged until one o'clock, then adjourned to meet the next night at eight o'clock. Promptly at the designated hour each man was in his place. They used every possible argument in persuading their pastor to remain, all of which was useless. Three of the members became so disgusted at the idea of his giving up their church, that they excused themselves before the meeting closed.

Now as the King's business demanded haste, it was agreed that he might make known his intentions to the church on Sunday, for not a single member of that board would be the first to make known his purpose. The favorable weather that Sunday seemed to have sanctioned the purpose of the pastor. The church was taxed for seating capacity when he announced his text from Matt. 24: 14, then read: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations and then shall the end come." There was a quivering in his voice recognized by many. As he spoke he appeared to have been absorbed in his text as never before. The people entered into sympathy with him for the heathens and felt that some one ought to haste away bearing the story of the cross. For fully one hour he eloquently spoke holding his audience spellbound. When he had

exhausted his prepared discourse, he drew from his inside coat pocket another paper and read: To the Beloved Saints of New Hope Baptist Church: I feel called upon this morning to make public this declaration which has been a weighty burden upon me for many years, to you I owe a debt of gratitude and love that time will never permit me to pay. Here my experience has come by toils, and they have been toils laden with bitters and sweets. But this experience doubtless was educating me for a nobler service, I have learned to love each of you, and [because of this fact I loath to tell you that the time has come when I must give back to you the cares and responsibilities of this great flock! But listen, do you not hear ringing in your own ears the cry of teeming millions as it comes. floating over the blue waters of the Atlantic, 'Give us the light.' I have answered the call. I hereby tender you my resignation as pastor, not as a matter of choice, but as one of duty. The rest of my days shall be spent among that people, many of whom do not know their left hand from their right. I beg, therefore, that this resignation take effect six months from today.

All of which I humbly submit.

RAYMOND ALSTON.

Silence prevailed for a short while, only broken in by sobs here and there among the people until Deacon Hopkins arose and said, "Let us pray".

Once in the history of this church did everybody bow in prayer. Both old and young were pleading with Jehovah, and what would impress one most, there were those who were recognized as vile sinners whispering a petition while hot tears kissed each other under their chins. When the prayer was over, Raymond beckoned to the audience who rose upon their feet while he with uplifted hands pronounced the benediction and walked back into his study.

The secretary of the Foreign Mission Board issued a special call meeting of the board immediately after receiving Raymond's letter offering his services to the board. The board accepted his services and his commission was forwarded at once. It was announced, therefore, through the papers that he would sail December 15.

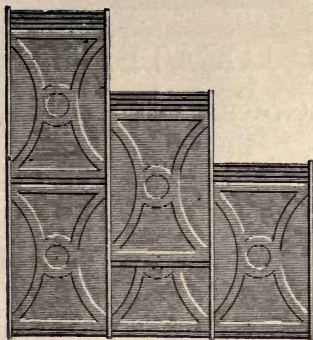
Yorkville is located on one of the largest rivers in the South. A city of one hundred and sixty thousand inhabitants had felt the influence of one unselfish life. His departure on Thursday, December 15, had given rise to an interesting subject in the school, around the table and desk in almost every home and business place. Darkness had scarcely given place to the light of the sun, which appeared to be rising out of the river that morning, before the tramp of feet were heard upon the pavement moving toward the wharf. Many were too full of anxiety to wait their breakfast. At nine o'clock several business places were closed. The

school bells rang but the teachers failed to appear, and not the voice of a child was heard upon the campus. Women left their household duties and men by hundreds did not report on duty. The hacks were rushing vainly to accommodate their customers and the street cars were overcrowded. The whole wharf was thronged and for a mile the people were strewn along the banks of the river.

It is nine-thirty o'clock for the tug boat is approaching from the opposite side in response to the signal. Now the flags are unfurled. Someone said: "There is the man that has attracted so much attention. How they shake his hand and weep as he pushes onward towards the boat." He was followed by his wife and three-year old son. The sound of the gong meant ten minutes more. The rest of the time was almost spent in silence. At the sound of a shrill whistle from Old Venice that was soon to plough the great Atlantic, the ropes were loosed and the captain gave orders to launch out. They floated on so gently that one could only tell that they were moving by the space that became wider between them and the boat. Thousands of handkerchiefs floated in the breeze as the boat moved farther and farther away. Then the little tug loosed her hold from Venice and gave a farewell signal and returned. As the large vessel glided onward she became smaller moment by moment until the handkerchiefs were lost from view.

Alas! the large vessel disappears in the distant blue
Here upon the banks of the river the crowd is left
impatiently waiting the news of his landing upon
Africa's shores.

THE END



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